

11 April 2006
Tuesday

READINGS

Psalm 12; Lamentations 1:17-22; II Corinthians 1:8-22; Mark 11:27-33

DEVOTION

“Bright Sadness” (Lamentations 1.17-22)

Traditionally, Lent is a season of sorrowful reflection expressed through fasting. In recognition of the day of resurrection, fasting is broken on Sundays. Lent is a period of mixed emotions; recognition of our sin and sorrow contrasted with the anticipated joyous celebration of Easter. We are forlorn about the suffering of life and sin, yet joyous about our salvation provided through Christ. Because it is a contrast of sentiments, it is known in Eastern Orthodox circles as the season of “bright sadness.” While we recognize the difficulties of life, our hope rests solely in Christ.

Today’s Scripture reflection from Lamentations gives us an example of “bright sadness” (Lam 1.17-22). In 586 B.C., Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar’s army. The city had managed to hold out for a year and a half, but eventually was overcome because of famine. The burning and plundering of Jerusalem brought a deep crisis of faith to God’s people. God had promised to protect them, yet they experienced incredible hardship, suffering, and death.

The book of Lamentations is a prophet’s questioning about the suffering of God’s people. The prophet honestly explored the situation, tackling the tough issues of hurt and disappointment that the people suffered. The prophet repeatedly recognized his own rebellion and sin as well as the sin of the people as a root cause of the tragedy (see verses 18, 20, 22). Although the lamenter did not understand all that had happened and why the destruction was so severe, he remained confident in God’s faithfulness. He believed that someday the day of the Lord would come, when God would establish His peace, justice, and righteousness upon the earth (v 21). The prophet experienced “bright sadness,” or hope within his despair.

Jerusalem can represent our own dreams, our ideals, and our hopes for our lives. Because of our own sinful actions, our Jerusalem may lie in ruins or suffer extreme adversity. Although we should never attribute all of our sufferings to our own sin, we should be honest and humble in recognizing when our own sin has brought destruction to our lives. It is then that we turn our hearts to God and ask for restoration. Are you experiencing difficulty in your life as a result of sin? Perhaps it is financial ruin, career changing events, or broken relationships. As we await God’s renewal in our lives, we live with “bright sadness,” with honest recognition of our need for God’s presence, healing, and love amidst our brokenness. We remain confident in the goodness of God whose mercies are new every morning.

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